

Red's Woods: Tough Choices Study Guide

Background Information:

When someone owns property, such as a stand of redwoods, they must make choices about its use. Should it be sold to someone else, or kept? Should it be developed for housing or a shopping center, or should it be kept the way it is? There are many other choices, of course, and each has advantages and disadvantages for the landowner and the community.

In this activity, students play the roles of various people as they debate or discuss what should happen to a fictitious tract of forest land known as Red's Woods, which is right next to the town of Treeville, in Redwood County. In reality, the size and location of the land would be an important factor, as would surrounding land uses, the local economy and other things.

For the sake of this activity, we are going to assume that:

Ole "Red" Svensen has died and left 100 acres of second-growth redwood forest to Redwood County, to be used as the county commissioners decide. The property was logged many years ago, but some of the trees are now 3 feet in diameter and 150 feet tall, with some large trees growing near the creek that flows through the property.

Various proposals have been put forth, including:

- ✓ Donating the land to the County Department of Parks and Recreation for hiking and camping, but not hunting or fishing, requiring money for insurance and maintenance,
- ✓ Selling the land to developers for housing (The county needs money for maintaining roads, schools, and public safety.),
- ✓ Selling the land to developers for a shopping center,
- ✓ Keeping the land for a county open space area where citizens can use it in a variety of ways, including hiking, camping, hunting and fishing. (This would cost the county money for insurance and maintenance.)

Six students will play the roles of **county commissioners** who will eventually decide what will happen to the land. The **teacher** will be the **chairperson** of the county commissioners and will run the hearing.

Seven other students will play the roles of people who have different ideas about what the land should be used for. These **hearing participants** have character cards.

Some students will play the roles of **newspaper reporters**. Those students won't actually participate in the discussion, but they will write newspaper articles about the proceedings.

Other students will play the roles of **citizens** from the community who don't participate in the discussion, but may write letters to the editor of the local newspaper, the *Redwood Reader*.

On day 1, roles will be assigned and hearing participants will begin to prepare their cases.

On day 2, the hearing participants will present their cases to the county commission.

On day 3, the newspaper reporters and letter writers read their articles or letters to the class.

Maria or Miguel Mercado: grocery store owner (COUNTY COMMISSION MEMBER)

You have lived in Redwood County all of your life. You own the only grocery store in Treeville, but the new freeway has made it easier for people to travel farther to the larger town that has discount stores. Since you work so much, you have little time to enjoy the out-of-doors.

**Stuart or Susan Sellahouse: realtor (COUNTY COMMISSION MEMBER)**

You sell real estate, mostly residential. You moved to Redwood County from the big city because you like the small town atmosphere of Treeville and the easy access to the forest. There are, however, very few homes for sale in the area, so you are worried about your job.

**Chris Coldwater: owner of Chris' Carvings (COUNTY COMMISSION MEMBER)**

You have lived in Redwood County all of your life. Your father was a logger. You own a small business making carvings from redwood, which you sell to tourists. Red Svensen lets you cut a few trees from his property each year.

**Bob or Betty Bibliophile: retired librarian and local activist (COUNTY COMMISSION MEMBER)**

You retired to Treeville 10 years ago because you love the small town and the surrounding forests. You have been a strong supporter of controlling growth, generally voting against any development that would bring in more people or result in loss of forests.

**Tom or Teresa Teachemall: high school teacher (COUNTY COMMISSION MEMBER)**

You are a local high school science teacher who frequently takes your classes on field trips to Red's Woods. You have, in fact, been doing scientific studies of a stream in Red's Woods and hope to publish a scientific article after one more year of study. You are concerned about your job because no new housing has been built in the last few years, so few families with children are moving to Treeville.

**Don or Dorothy Domestica: homemaker (COUNTY COMMISSION MEMBER)**

Your spouse earns a good living selling gasoline, and you are able to stay home to take care of your two children. You love the small town atmosphere of Treeville, but worry about possible changes if the town grows too much.

Bob or Betty Bigbucks: resident of Treeville

You love living in Treeville and have just inherited quite a bit of money. You would like to be able to purchase about two acres of Red's Woods to build your dream home.



Carl or Carly Caresalot: resident of Treeville

You are involved in causes that benefit the less fortunate people in Treeville. There is very little low income housing in Treeville, and few jobs are available for unskilled workers. You would like to see part of Red's Woods developed into low income housing and a shopping mall that would include some discount stores where people could shop and also get jobs.



Ranger Robin: park ranger at Big Burl State Park

Big Burl State Park is right next to Red's Woods. Over the years you have witnessed the increased pressure on the park, which is mostly due to more and more people visiting it. You would like to see Red's Woods become part of the park both to provide a buffer from the town and to provide more area where people can hike and camp.



Wanda or Wallie Woodworker: employee of Forest Resources Company, Inc.

Your company follows all of the state and local regulations and harvests redwood in a responsible way. In fact, your company has repaired poorly designed roads and creek crossings in Red's Woods. You would like to either have the county allow your company to log in Red's Woods, or for your company to purchase the property for logging.



Charlie or Cherie Citizen: local resident

You have been hiking in Red's Woods for years and have been a volunteer at Big Burl State Park, where you often lead groups of schoolchildren on field trips. You suspect that endangered species might be living in Red's Woods, and you want to try to protect the woods from development and logging.



Hal or Harriet Hikesalot: local resident

You have lived in Treeville for all of your 45 years, and you consider yourself an environmentalist and outdoors person. Sven allowed you to hike and hunt in Red's Woods, and you would like to continue to do so.



Sam or Sally Student: 11-year-old resident of Treeville

You like hiking in Red's Woods, but sometimes you wish the town had a skate park and a shopping center within biking distance.